



Quarterly CTIP Newsletter

Agency Highlights

2023 National Human Trafficking Prevention Month Awareness Event

Contributed by: Combating Trafficking in Persons PMO

On January 11, 2023, the Department of Defense Combating Trafficking in Persons Office kicked off the annual Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness month at the Pentagon with the film screening, *Sextortion: The Hidden Pandemic*, (<https://sextortionfilm.com/#trailer>), followed by a panel discussion from those featured in the documentary. In his opening remarks William H. Booth, Director of Defense Human Resources Activity (DHRA), reminded personnel that it is important to be aware of human trafficking year-round, and that predators can lurk in unexpected places, including the DoD.



The Academy Award nominated film, *Sextortion: The Hidden Pandemic*, investigates the world of online grooming and sextortion—a present-day reality for one in seven children online. The Auroris Media* film hits home for the DoD, as the film centers around the predatory behavior of Daniel Harris, who was a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy and a Navy Top Gun graduate stationed at Naval Air Station Oceana. A total of nine victims were identified and, during the Federal trial, the jury was presented with evidence that Harris posed online as a teenage boy, manipulating girls between the ages of 12 and 17 to send him risqué and sexually explicit photos of themselves. As part of his scheme, he extorted the victims to send additional, sexually graphic and explicit images of themselves. If the girls did not comply, he threatened to post the images online, through social media, and/or send the images to family or friends. On March 9, 2015, Harris was found guilty on 31 counts related to sextortion and later sentenced to 50 years in prison. Although the prison sentence may bring closure to the criminal justice realm, sextortion has a lingering impact on the lives of the victims and their loved ones.



Following the screening of the film, a panel discussion with audience questions highlighted the need for increased awareness and tools to protect and empower victims. The panelists included Michelle DeLaune, President, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), Supervisory Special Agent Jim Cole, Homeland Security Investigations and Chair- INTERPOL Specialists Group on Crimes Against Children, Maria Peek, Director/Producer/Editor of *Sextortion: The Hidden Pandemic*, and Stephen Peek, Producer/Cinematographer of *Sextortion: The Hidden Pandemic*. The panelists emphasized that educating parents and children to the dangers that exist with online platforms and social media is an important first step.

According to the Department of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), sextortion often includes the following common tactics predators use to entice victims:

- Developing a false rapport with the victim

- Secretly recording explicit videos and messages during chats
- Using multiple identities to contact the child
- Pretending to be younger or a member of the opposite sex
- Hacking accounts to steal sexual images
- Threatening to commit suicide if the victim refuses to send images
- Visiting public social media profiles to find out more about the victim, including accessing the victim's friend list and searching for other personal information that may harm their victim's reputation

Predators often initiate contact with a victim on one platform, then ask them to move to a second or third platform that uses encrypted messaging to make tracking their crimes more difficult. According to the panel experts, cases of sextortion increasingly involve demands for money as well as sexually explicit images and videos.

While online dangers exist, learning about sextortion is one key to preventing the crime and protecting others. The DoD CTIP Office developed an online resource for high school students to raise awareness about human trafficking occurring in schools. One of the lessons is on sextortion. The CTIP Student Guide to Preventing Human Trafficking is accessible [here](#).

If you or someone you know has experienced sextortion, there are resources to help. In addition to the [CyberTipline](#), the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) recently launched a new resource: [Take it Down](#), empowering youth with the ability to self-report their images for removal from online websites. Take It Down is a free service that helps individuals remove or stop the online sharing of nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit images or videos taken when they were under 18 years old. Users can remain anonymous while using the service and do not have to send images or videos to anyone. Take It Down will work on public or unencrypted online platforms that have agreed to participate.

The DoD CTIP PMO will continue with platforms to provide information on human trafficking and child exploitation to ensure DoD personnel are aware of these dangers that our communities face and what actions are needed to prevent it!

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Featured Articles

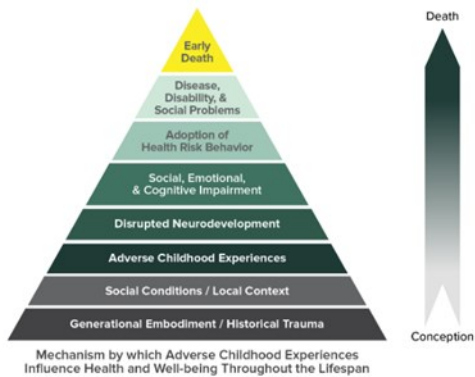
ACES – Early Risk Factors for Human Trafficking

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One of the primary missions of the DoD Combating Trafficking in Persons Office is prevention. Bringing information to DoD personnel about topics related to human trafficking is one means of prevention, such as the connection between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trafficking. Sadly, childhood trauma is not limited to any specific group and can infiltrate any population, including the Defense community. Survivor stories, such as those from [Jerome Elam](#) and [Barbara Amaya](#), provide glimpses of the thread connecting early childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction to additional trauma throughout the lifespan, including exploitation and human trafficking. As the number of identified victims of human trafficking continues to rise, a renewed focus on prevention includes the need to identify and address risk factors found in childhood. The magnitude of the problem is evident. According to the 2021 National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics, in the United States, a total of 10,360 unique cases (incidents) of potential human trafficking were reported to the Hotline in 2021. Of those cases, 136 situations (13%) involved minor victims of labor trafficking and 2,078 (28%) involved minor victims of sex trafficking.

To develop a deeper understanding of the risk factors that contribute to the vulnerability for potential victimi-

zation, a [collaborative study](#) from 1995-1997 between the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente examined how traumatic events in childhood are linked to negative overall effects on health and wellbeing throughout the lifespan.



The CDC-Kaiser study focused on identifying and defining adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). As defined in the original study, ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). The original CDC-Kaiser ACE Study identified several socio-behavioral and socio-economic factors adversely affecting youth, demonstrating that the greater the number of ACEs, the higher the cases of negative impact in life including: chronic disease, incarceration, employment challenges and an increased vulnerability and risk for further victimization and abuse.

In a subsequent study from the Philadelphia ACE Project, the expansion of research into ACEs includes environmental factors. With this expansion, the research identified some of the most common ACEs:

- **Abuse: physical, sexual, emotional**
- **Household dysfunction:**
 - * mother treated violently
 - * substance abuse in the household
 - * mental illness in the household
 - * incarcerated household member
 - * having a family member attempt or die by suicide
 - * parental separation or divorce
- **Neglect: emotional or physical**
- **Witnessing or experiencing violence, racism, or bullying in the community**
- **Living in foster care, group home, or homeless**



Figure 1

Compounding the issue, additional studies have shown that the higher the number of ACEs a person experiences before the age of 18, the higher the correlation with negative outcomes and vulnerability for further abuse or violence, to include human trafficking and child exploitation. To further understand the critical link between ACEs and human trafficking, a group of researchers from the University of Southern Florida began their study, “*Human Trafficking of Minors and Childhood Adversity in Florida*”, analyzing all youth in Florida with a history of arrest and human trafficking abuse reports from 2009-2015. The results of their study were published in 2017 in the *American Journal of Public Health*, illustrating the striking correlation that the higher number of ACEs, the higher the susceptibility to human trafficking. Their study also highlighted the alarming link to one of the ACEs, childhood sexual abuse, as the strongest predictor for human trafficking.

In a February 2022 publication, *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Homelessness: A Critical Examination of the Association between Specific ACEs and Sex Trafficking among Homeless Youth in Kentuckiana*, researchers found that of the 119 youth reviewed, all of them had at least one ACE. Furthermore, their study found the ACEs most frequently connected with those who experienced sex trafficking were physical neglect, emotional neglect, emotional abuse, domestic abuse, and sexual abuse. Their study also reinforced prior research showing that those who experienced sex trafficking had a higher number of ACEs.

The correlation between ACEs and vulnerability for human trafficking and child exploitation found in the research offers a unique focus to create protective factors for those most at risk. With deeper understanding of the issues, prevention efforts can leverage the best practices across various organizations and communities to protect youth, prevent ACEs and build a resilient future. Although not part of the ACEs, protective factors also take into account dynamics specific to certain communities. The unique structure of the Department of Defense (DoD) community also impacts youth differently than other populations, with family stressors that

may include separation from one or both parents or caregivers due to deployments and frequent moves due to permanent change of station. For more information and tools for prevention, visit [Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\): Leveraging the Best Available Evidence](#) to access the CDC’s suite of tools.

The U.S. Department of Defense Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Program Management Office (PMO) and Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) developed the [CTIP Student Guide to Preventing Human Trafficking, with an accompanying Parent Resource Guide](#). Together these resources teach military-connected high school students (10th – 12th grade) and parents about human trafficking as it occurs in student settings, particularly online risks where exploitation of children and teens is increasing.

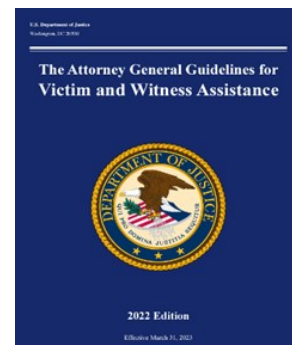
Figure 1 Source: Cronholm, P. F., Forke, C. M., Wade, R., Bair-Merritt, M. H., Davis, M., Harkins-Schwarz, M., Pachter, L. M., & Fein, J. A. (2015). Adverse childhood experiences: Expanding the concept of adversity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 49(3), 354–361.

Interagency Activities



In January 2023, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) released the newly revised [USAID Counter-Trafficking in Persons \(C-TIP\) Field Guide](#), a reference tool for USAID staff and partners to help implement the revised C-TIP programming objectives of the revised USAID C-TIP Policy. Updates to the Guide include expanding the Annex describing illustrative activities and possible indicators related to programming in prevention and awareness raising, developing better identification and referral protocols for protection, and improving the legislative enabling environment to address TIP.

The Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crimes released the [Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance 2022 Edition](#), effective March 31, 2023, to establish guidelines to be followed by officers and employees of the U.S. Department of Justice investigative, prosecutorial, correctional, and parole components in the treatment of victims and witnesses to crime.



DoD CTIP Program Office Updates



The Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Kathleen Hicks, represented the Department of Defense at the President’s Interagency Task Force (PITF) to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons meeting on February 13, 2023. Dr. Hicks highlighted DoD’s recent accomplishments and upcoming projects, such as two specialized trainings, one for DoD health personnel and one for DoD Chaplains; the Resale Organizations DoD guidance; and adding more videos and narratives to the Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking webpage.

The CTIP Program Manager, Ms. Linda Dixon, gave several presentations at the Pentagon and virtually to the Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program. The presentations focused on the DoD’s policies and program centered on combating human trafficking. International delegations included: Kyrgyz Republic, Middle East, Liberia, and a Multi-Regional group.

For more information, visit : <http://ctip.defense.gov>

The CTIP PMO added three new survivors to the [Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking](#) page on the CTIP website: Shelby Thompson, Barbara Amaya, and Keyana Marshall, survivors of sex trafficking.

**DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE CTIP
PROGRAM OFFICE**

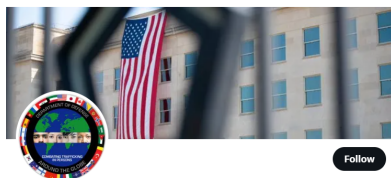
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The Government Accountability Office closed the six recommendations as implemented for GAO [Report 21-546 - Human Trafficking: DoD Should Address Weaknesses in Oversight of Contractors and Reporting of Investigations Related to Contracts.](#)



Check out the [CTIP Website](#)! The website includes tabs for CTIP resources, acquisition resources, a resource library, and How to Report TIP!



Follow us on social media! The CTIP PMO is now on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#)!

U.S. DoD Combating Trafficking in Persons Office

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U.S. Department of Defense Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office (PMO). Following, RTs, links, and likes + endorsement.

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Have ideas for the next issue? Submit your suggestions and agency highlights to dodctip@mail.mil.

Upcoming Events

- o The next CTIP Quarterly Task Force meeting will be April 12, 2023.